

TOOL: Promoting diversity internally

This helps you to promote diversity on a macro and micro level throughout an organisation. Every workplace is different and at varying stages of the diversity journey. This tool is a foundation to the promotion of cultural diversity based on the strengths of your organisation, at a leadership, an organisational and an individual level.

Leadership level

Promoting cultural diversity through leadership channels is not just limited to the leadership at an executive level. Depending on the size and structure of your organisation, this can include team leaders or site managers. It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that staff can see diversity as a priority in the workplace. Here are some practical ways that leaders can foster a workplace that promotes and appreciates diversity:

Promote open discussion with staff and be open to educating your staff

Provide opportunities for staff to discuss and learn about cultural diversity. This can be done by sharing relevant articles or providing educational materials about the benefits, challenges and approaches to cultural diversity in the workplace. Committing time to discussions shows that diversity and inclusion is a priority, and allows staff to ask questions, learn and advocate.

Be aware of your own unconscious biases

Unconscious bias is something that everyone has, regardless of cultural background or cultural competency. So, it's important to keep this in mind every day at the workplace. Leaders should be open about their personal development in this area as it will stimulate self-awareness among all staff.

Listen to all complaints about bias or discrimination and speak up against inappropriate behaviour

Complaints about bias and discrimination will be heard by leaders. These complaints must be treated with respect and kindness. Leaders need to openly speak up against instances of discrimination or other inappropriate behaviour to demonstrate the values of cultural diversity in the organisation.

Organisational level

A 'whole-of-organisation' approach is needed to fully foster and promote cultural diversity. This brings together individuals and leaders, building a community of inclusion. Here are some tips for organisations wanting to promote cultural diversity:

Celebrate existing diversity in the organisation or business

If workplaces have existing staff from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, promoting diversity can be done through hosting multicultural events such as Harmony Day and a Taste of Harmony. If you are aware of the cultural backgrounds of staff, explore cultural days of significance that could be celebrated such as the Lunar New Year, Iftar dinners or national and/or independence days.

Create staff networks for diversity

Establishing staff networks for people of diverse backgrounds is a meaningful step in creating a safe space in the workplace. Networks allow diverse staff to express their personal experiences without judgement and also allow the broader organisation to address any barriers to inclusion and diversity.

Encourage dialogue about diversity

Open forums in the workplace about cultural diversity promote a dialogue about people's positive experiences and challenges. They could involve inviting a guest speaker or facilitating a broader discussion. This showcases ideas about cultural diversity and fosters a sense of community and ownership of diversity and inclusion practices.

Find and support sponsors and champions

Finding people to champion diversity and inclusion will ensure it remains a priority. Ensure adequate support for your champions and make sure they are not given too many responsibilities.

Individual level

Individual staff play an important role in embracing cultural diversity in their everyday practices. Some organisations do not yet have leadership buy-in when it comes to cultural diversity and inclusion. In these cases, it can be the individual staff that create change and promote diversity and inclusion within the workplace.

Individual approaches to promoting diversity in your workplace include:

Looking for and fixing imbalances in your information and media sources

Look at where your information and media come from. Consider your social media, such as Twitter or Instagram, or who you talk to for information, opinions or advice. Seek different points of view to gain a better understanding of your colleagues.

Actively include others in your workplace

A visible effort to include culturally diverse colleagues in discussions and activities fosters an environment that is inclusive and welcoming for new staff. Be an example in the workplace for others to promote the inclusion of diverse perspectives and opinions in discussions and decision making.

Commit to continuous improvement and improve individual cultural competency

Develop an awareness of how you may be including or excluding others. Take on board what is taught in cultural competency training. There is always opportunity for improvement in the space of cultural competency, self-evaluating and finding gaps in knowledge.

Communicate openly and educate yourself

Open discussions with colleagues in the workplace will both educate yourself and promote the diversity and inclusion in your organisation. This can involve conversations about your personal journey of cultural competency or can be done by sharing articles or interesting stories (not always about success) about cultural diversity in your industry.